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Testimony of the Mental Health Association of Connecticut (MHAC)

Before the Public Health Committee

March 4, 2015

Regarding

H.B. No. 5626: An Act Concerning Prescription Drugs for Psychiatric Patients

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, Senator Markley, and Representative Srinivasan and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee, I am Wendi Fralick, Senior Director of Advocacy with the Mental Health Association of Connecticut (MHAC). As a statewide advocacy organization and direct service provider, MHAC assists people with mental illnesses and co-occurring disorders live integrated, healthy lives in our communities. To this end, please accept this testimony in opposition of **H.B. No. 5626: An Act Concerning Prescription Drugs for Psychiatric Patients**.

As it is currently written, this legislation would prohibit health care providers from prescribing more than a one-month supply of a drug to treat a patient's psychiatric condition in order to prevent misuse of prescription drugs. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the three classes of prescription drugs that are most often abused are: (1) opioids used to treat pain, (2) central nervous system depressants, such as Xanax and Valium, used to treat anxiety and sleeping disorders, and (3) stimulants, such as Adderall or Ritalin, used to treat attention deficit disorder and narcolepsy. Thus, the majority of drugs used to treat symptoms associated with mental health conditions, such as depression, bipolar disorder, borderline personality disorder, dissociative disorder, and obsessive-compulsive disorder, are not among the drugs that are most often abused.

Furthermore, restricting medications to treat psychiatric conditions to only one-month eliminates health care providers decision-making ability to best meet the needs of their patients, eliminates the opportunity for people with mental health conditions to take advantage of cost-savings associated with 90-day prescription refills, and places undue burden and restricts lifestyle flexibility for people with mental health conditions.

In addition, this legislation directly discriminates against people with mental health conditions based solely on a mental health diagnosis. In fact, it insinuates that people with mental health conditions misuse prescription medications while people who use the most often abused prescription medications for chronic pain and sleep disorders don't.

For these reasons, we oppose this legislation and hope the Public Health Committee will refrain from supporting legislation that does not promote equal access to health and wellness in our communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.